About the TOOLKIT
The Building in Context toolkit has been developed by EH, CABE and the Kent Architecture Centre. It grew out of the publication ‘Building in Context’ published by EH and CABE in 2001. The purpose of the publication was to stimulate a high standard of design when development takes place in historically sensitive contexts. The founding principle is that all successful design solutions depend on allowing time for a thorough site analysis and character appraisal of context. Building in Context TOOLKIT training aims to help those making decisions to reach effective and balanced design decisions.

It is proven to be useful in communicating issues of development in complex situations; helping convey the depth of expertise required in adopting a holistic approach to site development and reduced ‘silo mentality’. Through the analysis of a case study, wider design issues than ‘how it looks’ are explored.

Each workshop consists of a presentation looking at the key issues covered in Building in Context, followed by local and regional case studies, a practical, hands-on drawing activity, and an opportunity to discuss the complex issues associated with successfully incorporating contemporary design in sensitive locations.

The Building in Context Toolkit Programme aims to:
- Enable wider understanding of the principles of developing appropriate contemporary design in historic areas to a range of professionals and community groups.
- Enable those involved in making decisions affecting historic areas in their attainment of a more effective, balanced and efficient service resulting in improvement of those decisions affecting the quality of the historic environment for future generations.
- Promote sustainable new and re-used development that doesn’t sacrifice what future generations will value for the sake of short-term and often illusory gains so that we use already developed areas in the most efficient way, while making them more attractive places in which to live and work and conserving our cultural heritage.

This was the second in a series of events being jointly run by beam and Places Matter! - the Yorkshire and Northwest centres for design excellence. The event was held at the Orangery in Wakefield, the headquarters of beam and the focus of the event was the Art House, a new building currently under construction.

We had a very diverse group of people which added depth to the nature of the discussions. Participants ranged from councillors and officers from 12 Local Authorities from across the whole M62 corridor from Hull and Cleethorpes to Preston and Wigan, as well as private developers, a student and community representatives.

Those who lacked formal urban design training contributed as private developers, a student and community representatives.

The case study illustrated by Simon Warren from Bauman Lyons was the ‘Art House’. He has recently set up his own architectural practice.

In this capacity, he was responsible for the design of the Art House. He has tutored at Leeds Metropolitan University as private developers, a student and community representatives.

Simon Warren has been a director of Bauman Lyons Architects since 1999, he first joined the practice in 1993. He was part of the architectural team that delivered South Promenade Bridlington. His main concern is to be involved in socially responsible architecture particularly within the Yorkshire region. Simon is a CABE enabler. He has tutored at Leeds School of Architecture.

Thanks are extended to our other facilitators on the day:
- Annie Atkins, Manager Places Matter!
- Nigel Barker, Historic Areas Advisor, English Heritage

About the Speakers
Helen Farrar (Lead Facilitator)
Helen is a CABE regional rep and Chartered Landscape Architect and regeneration professional who has worked in the Yorkshire and Humber region for 20 years, most recently as Urban Renaissance Manager at Yorkshire Forward before commencing freelance consultancy in 2004. She now specialises as a strategic advisor to the public, voluntary and academic sectors in areas relating to urban regeneration, landscape architecture and regeneration – policy, practice and skills.

Ian Thomson
Ian has been at Wakefield MDC for four years where he is the Service Director for Planning. Prior to coming to Wakefield, Ian worked at Rotherham and York councils.

Kathryn Gibson
Kathryn joined English Heritage as Historic Buildings and Areas Advisor for West Yorkshire in 2006. Her work for English Heritage involves providing specialist advice on development proposals affecting the historic environment and on schemes relating to the management of historic areas, including conservation area designation, management and the setting up and running of grant schemes.

Simon Warren
Simon Warren has been a director of Bauman Lyons Architects since 1999. He first joined the practice in 1993. He was part of the architectural team that delivered South Promenade Bridlington. His main concern is to be involved in socially responsible architecture particularly within the Yorkshire region. Simon is a CABE enabler. He has tutored at Leeds School of Architecture.

Jerry Spencer
Jerry is a planner and urban designer who has helped deliver regeneration of historic environments, notably in Hackney, Nottingham, Gloucester and Stoke. Jerry is a former head of design for the NWDAs and is now an independent consultant specialising in public sector capacity building and training.

About The Architect
Simon Gedye is an architect and until recently was a Director of Design Direction for Allen Tod Architects. In this capacity, he was responsible for the design of the Art House. He has recently set up his own architectural practice.

Our Facilitators
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- Annie Atkins, Manager Places Matter!
- Nigel Barker, Historic Areas Advisor, English Heritage

Wakefield
13 December 2007
The workshop groups first did some figure-ground drawing and ground-figure drawings to compare what they showed. The latter highlighted a surprising amount of space that had not been apparent from the figure-ground drawings. Participants had maps from the 1890s, from the 1950s and masterplans for the future development. Jerry Spencer was able to draw out what the plans were saying once the participants gathered to give feedback. They were able to interpret the experience of a pedestrian for each of the plans.

They also had architectural drawings and drawings of the Art House which they could later compare to the site itself.

Participants explored the site of the new Art House whilst taking in the surrounding context. The participants needed to consider that the rear of the building is to become another frontage when the new Emerald Ring is later constructed.

The general feeling was that, whilst the building fulfilled the requirements of the Building in Context key principles, it nevertheless was not particularly successful in other ways. This raised questions as to why this should be the case.

The participants concluded that this was largely due to the failure of the principles to address the character or personality of the site. They suggested that a seventh principle should be added – architectural character – a set of more fundamental principles of substance, such as robustness or light-heartedness in appearance – i.e. dealing with what the building actually looks like. It was noted that although this can’t be measured, how much agreement there is on it. Participants felt that there was opportunity for the building to have more gravitas or presence, and a greater sense of strength or permanence. They felt that the addition of shadow lines could have helped with this. A more confident and expressive building front was called for, to reflect the strong character of the chapel, the shopping street and the library.

The other key issue that the day raised was the importance of the social context of a site and that there was a need for community consultation for a site to be successful and appreciating and interpreting the ‘collective memory’ of local people as part of the analysis process so that the community to relate to it and want to maintain it.

Jane Field 17.12.07

From Building in Context, pg 37

www.building-in-context.org

Changing Wakefield
By Jane Field

Grand civic structures announce their importance
Beneath, more modest offerings scatter far and wide
Watched over by impenetrable walls
Concealing unpleasant truths.

Infinite variety of facades
Interweaving, threading their way forward
Creating a harmony of difference
Old and tired replaced by new and vibrant
Change permeates…

Inviting alleyways reveal different views
One, blocked by walls
Another, spires arise in unison
Suddenly, a glimpse of the world beyond
A shock of tree-lined hills,
Softening the harshness of the walls

Comforting there, quiet.
While round every corner
The towering steeple calls

Drawing me,
Feet stumbling on towards the city
Trip over too many paved pavements

Bustling streets burst forth before me
City dwellers outside pavement cafes
Watch passers by
Faster, moving forward…

Cathedral steps greet shop lined walks
Strong, determined, majestic
The cathedral casts its shadow over its younger protégés
Stopping me to gaze in awe.

Trees soften the scene
Space to enjoy and wallow.

Meanwhile, the indoor city
Shouts its presence
Bright lights illuminate
Lofty pillars pointing up towards the glass domed roof
Reflections bounce from wall to wall

Movement all around.

Outside once more
New perspectives
Changing styles
Echoes of former lives

Bringing intricate details to life
Change permeates…

Jane is a creative writer, and wrote ‘Changing Wakefield’ on the training day. Jane is also the Senior Learning Manager for beam and is the Yorkshire and Northwest co-ordinator for the Building in Context Programme.